

Message Text

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67

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3661

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EO: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: PRESIDENT LOPEZ ATTACK GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY

1. PRESIDENT LOPEZ ADDRESSED THE NATION IN AN HOUR-LONG TELEVISED SPEECH ON FEBRUARY 20, THE MAIN FEATURE OF WHICH WAS AN ATTACK ON "A VORACIOUS AND INCOMPETENT BUREAUCRACY". HE STATED THAT THE GOC WOULD NOT INSTITUTIONALIZE EXCESSIVE ANNUAL SALARY INCREASES FOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND DESCRIBED THE RECENT WAVE OF STRIKES IN VARIOUS PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AS EVIDENCE THAT THE BUREAUCRACY IS ENGAGED IN A BATTLE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. AS LONG AS HE IS IN POWER, LOPEZ SAID, HE WILL NOT LET THE "GREEDY BUREAUCRACY" EAT UP THE REVENUES FROM THE 1974 TAX REFORM.

2. THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT, IN ADDITION TO HOLDING THE LINE ON SALARY INCREASES, HE WOULD INTERVENE INDIRECTLY IN THE MUNICIPAL PUBLIC SERVICES BY HAVING MAYORS NAME THE MANAGERS OF THESE INSTITUTIONS. THE GOC WOULD THUS OBTAIN SOME CONTROL OVER THE DECENTRALIZED ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM WHICH NOW ALLOWS THESE INSTITUTIONS TO COMMIT THE GOC TO UNWANTED FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS. AS A LONGER TERM SOLUTION, THE PRESIDENT AGAIN CALLED FOR THE REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENTS THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION IN 1978.

3. PRESIDENT LOPEZ ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD MAINTAIN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATE OF SIEGE AS LONG AS THE PRESENT "ABNORMAL" CONDITION OF VIO-

LENCE AND KIDNAPPINGS CONTINUES, AND AGAIN GUARANTEED THAT THIS
WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE MID-TERM ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

4. FINALLY, HE DEFENDED HIS GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE
AGAINST RECENT ATTACKS BY EX-PRESIDENT PASTRANA AND OTHERS. THE
PRESIDENT'S HARD-LINE SPEECH INDICATES THAT HE REMAINS COMMITTED
TO CARRY OUT HIS LONG-RANGE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AIMED
AT AIDING THE POOREST OF THE NATION AT THE RISK OF SHORT-TERM UN-
POPULARITY. THE PRESSURES ON HIS COMMITMENT WILL PROBABLY CON-
TINUE.
VAKY

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